

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MMOL, GR, TU, US

SUBJECT: ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF AIRLIFT THROUGH
ATHENAI AB OF MILITARY CARGO FOR TURKEY

REFS: (A) ATHENS 1367; (B) CJUSMAGG 201455Z FEB 75;
(C) ATHENS 1491; (D) STATE 043507 (ALL NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PREVIOUS INDICATIONS OF GOG SENSITIVITY RE AIR-
LIFT OF MILITARY MATERIAL TO TURKEY PRESAGE POTENTIALLY
GREAT PROBLEM IF ATHENAI AB USED FOR SUCH PURPOSES.
EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT ALTERNATIVE ROUTING BE ADOPTED
FOR SUCH OPERATIONS. END SUMMARY

1. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL (REFS A AND B) THAT IN FEBRU-
ARY 1975, AS A REACTION TO ONE OF PERIODIC PROBES BY
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EMBASSY REGARDING NEED FOR RELAXATION OF RESTRICTIONS ON

USE OF SOUDA AB, DEFMIN AVEROFF REFERRED TO OSTENSIBLE BELIEF BY SOME GREEKS THAT USG HAD USED SOUDA AB FOR RESUPPLY OF TURKEY AND SOUGHT LETTER FROM USG DISCLAIM-ING SUCH ACTIONS. EMBASSY FORESAW THAT ALTHOUGH SELF-ABSOLUTION WAS POSSIBLE REGARDING US USE OF SOUDA AB, VERY GREAT DIFFICULTY WOULD BE ENCOUNTERED IF GOG SHOULD THEN SEEK SIMILAR ASSURANCES WITH RESPECT TO US USE OF ATHENAI AB, AND RECOMMENDED THAT ONLY VERBAL ASSURANCE BE GIVEN RE SOUDA AB (REF C). DEPARTMENT AGREED (REF D).

2. FUTURE OF US PRESENCE AT ATHENAI AB (HELLENIKON) IS NOW UNDER NEGOTIATION, WITH PRESERVATION OF THIS BASE AS AN AERIAL PORT ONE OF PRIMARY US OBJECTIVES. IN A PARALLEL CHAIN OF EVENTS, RECENT CONGRESSIONAL ACTION PARTIALLY LIFTING EMBARGO ON US ARMS SHIPMENTS TO TURKEY HAS OPENED ARMS SUPPLY PIPELINE TO TURKEY WITH EIGHT MONTHS BACKLOG IN IT. IT OCCURS TO EMBASSY THAT NEED FOR SOME ITEMS MIGHT BE ACUTE ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY SHIPMENT BY MILITARY AIRLIFT AND THAT FLIGHTS CARRYING SUCH SHIPMENTS PROBABLY WOULD TRANSIT ATHENAI AB. IN THIS EVENT, AND SHOULD GOG BECOME AWARE THAT ARMS SHIPMENTS FOR TURKEY WERE TRANSITING A GREEK BASE, WE FORESEE CONSEQUENCES VERY ADVERSE TO OUR EFFORTS TO RETAIN USE OF ATHENAI AB.

3. IT IS DISTINCTLY POSSIBLE THAT THE GOG WOULD, FOR EXAMPLE, DEMAND THAT US REFRAIN FROM FURTHER SUCH SHIPMENTS THROUGH ATHENAI AB, PROBABLY ACCOMPANIED BY REQUIREMENT THAT GREEK OFFICIALS HAVE ACCESS TO TRANSITING MAC AIRCRAFT IN ORDER TO ENFORCE THE DEMAND. A STIFFENING GOG POSITION IN THE NEGOTIATIONS ON HELLENIKON WOULD PROBABLY RESULT FROM THE SITUATION POSTULATED ABOVE. EVEN WORSE WOULD BE RESULT IF POLITICAL OPPOSITION OR PRESS CHARGED THAT ARMS SHIPMENTS FOR TURKEY WERE TRANSITING ATHENAI AB. IN THIS EVENT, HUE AND CRY WOULD BE SUCH THAT GOG ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD FEEL THAT IT HAD NO RECOURSE BUT TO REQUIRE CLOSURE OF ATHENAI AB.

4. EMBASSY IS WELL AWARE THAT NORMAL METHODS OF HANDLING AIRLIFT CARGO ARE PREDICATED UPON REQUIREMENT FOR OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY RATHER THAN NEED TO AVOID POLITICAL

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REPERCUSSIONS. NEVERTHELESS, IN VIEW OF VERY REAL POTENTIAL FOR CREATION OF SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM, WE WOULD URGE THAT MILITARY SHIPMENTS AIRLIFTED TO TURKEY BE ROUTED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID TRANSITING ATHENAI AB. THIS ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN FOR AS LONG AS THE STATUS OF ATHENAI AB IS UNRESOLVED AND AS LONG AS TENSIONS REMAIN HIGH BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY, SITUATIONS WHICH MIGHT WELL TURN OUT TO BE CO-TERMINAL. SIMILAR SHIPMENTS FOR

US FORCES IN TURKEY NEED NOT, OF COURSE, BE SUBJECTED TO
SUGGESTED RESTRICTIONS.
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